DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 161 CS 010 577

AUTHOR Mallak, Joan E.
TITLE A Comparison of the Whole Language Philosophy of Instruction with the Basal Reading Program. Grades K-2.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 59p.; M.Ed. Final Project, Grand Valley State University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; Classroom Environment; Comparative Analysis; Curriculum Evaluation; Literature Reviews; Primary Education; Teacher Role; *Whole Language Approach

ABSTRACT

A study critically reviews the practices and purposes of the new basal reading series and the whole language philosophy. The study explores the possibility of a comprehensive adoption of either program or a combination of both. Results of the review indicate the desirability of using the whole language philosophy and creating a classroom that is real, natural, and functional. Recommendations focus on the importance of the teacher's incorporating the necessary skills and sound/symbols within the literature lesson. (Thirty-six references, curricular objectives, and examples of letters from schools to parents are attached.) (Author/RS)

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A COMPARISON OF THE WHOLE LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY OF INSTRUCTION WITH THE BASAL READING PROGRAM GRADES K-2

by
Joan E. Mallak

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FINAL PROJECT
Submitted to the School of Education
for the
Degree of Master of Education

Grand Valley State University
April 1991

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to:

James O. Grant Phd. for encouraging me to resume my graduate studies.

Faite Mack Phd. for his faith in my ability.

and

Dorothy Armstrong Phd. for motivating me to do future research.

GLOSSARY

Authentic Literacy Event....Instruction presented within the context of a complete literary piece.

Authentic Reading.....Reading books that have not been edited to control vocabulary or skill sequence.

Basal.....A set of books which are sequenced throughout the grades.

Basal Series Materials.....Supplementary materials such as workbooks, worksheets, charts, and teachers manual for direction to the presentation instruction.

Child-Centered.....An Atmosphere where the child is respected.

Cognition.....Something that is known--Knowledge.

Communication of Meaning....Deriving meaning from what is written and spoken.

Contexualization.....Instructional material presented in context. ex. Letters sounds and names presented in a story or poem.

Developmental Stage.....The stages all children pass through on their way to maturity.

Developmentally Appropriate.As applied to the educational classroom the material and presentation are appropriate for each child's age ability.

Equal Educational Opportunity.....Every child has the right, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, to be educated by equal standards.

Internalize.....Being able to remember. To have ownership of the knowledge.

Literacy.....Cultivation of academic studies and culture.

Language Arts	The study of reading, speaking, listening, and writing.
Literature Based	Tying the curriculum to the reading of trade books rather than basal textbooks
Metacognition	Awareness of ones own knowledge.
Phonic	Speech sounds
Picture Dependent	The meaning of a text of a story is not clear without the picture.
Psycholinguistics	The study of language and the behavior of the speaker.
Segmenting	Dividing words into sound groups.
Skilled Language User	Being able to use language effectively.
Sound/Symbols	The phonic sound and character of a letter or group of letters.
Standardized Tests	Tests that have been given to a large segment of the population and the scores are averaged and studied to set a standard for other students to take.
String of Sounds	Phonic sounds without meaning attached.
Trade Books	Those books purchased by libraries or by others for the books literary quality.
Whole Language	A philosophy of education where all areas of the curriculum are taught in context.
Whole Word	Not segmenting words into sounds.

ABSTRACT

This study is a critical review of the practices and purposes of the new Basal Reading series and the Whole Language philosophy. The possibility of a comprehensive adoption of either programs or a combination of both is explored. The research indicates the desirability of using the Whole Language philosophy and creating a classroom that is real, natural and functional. The teacher will need to incorporate the necessary skills and sound/symbols within the literature lesson.

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM

School systems continue their search for the best educational formula to promote literacy among their students. Currently the two theories being examined contrast the basal textbook curriculum with the whole language philosophy.

Proponents of using the basal curriculum strongly agree with the Commission on Reading's statement: "Children who are taught phonics get off to a better start learning" (Commission on Reading, 1985). They feel segmenting language into sound/symbols and, then, using skills to master the language rules is a process which is in harmony with the child's development.

Forman and Kruschmer (1983) described the basal text curriculum, with its wide use of skills, phonics in isolation, workbooks, and worksheets as the use of the "copying theory" of Piaget. Piaget (1973) characterized the "copying theory of knowledge" as one where the child attends closely to learn. His senses need to be trained to see the details of the environment. Piaget questioned this theory because he felt children learned in a whole, not in parts.

The Whole Language philosophy realizes there are parts to be learned about our language (Goodman, 1986), but they need to be taught in the context of the language as a whole. Piaget and Inhelder (1983) declared it was not possible to deny that a child's language is the whole of his understanding. While transforming the world of objects into a whole picture the child can understand his relationship to his environment. There is a growing number of early childhood educators who are endorsing this developmental research and are incorporating the Whole Language philosophy into their curriculum. It is this Whole Language approach which is being proposed for use in the Kentwood Early Childhood Curriculum. Administrators, teachers, and laymen alike, are questioning which of these language approaches will provide the skills to meet the challenge of the new definition of reading: "Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written text." (Commission on Reading, 1985)

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The question of which educational approach fosters the greater success for the student has been debated since Horace Mann advocated the adoption of "universal schooling". Equal educational opportunity meant that the entrance ability level of the students would be wide and

diverse (Graham, 1984). Beginning in the 19th century, studies usually showed each succeeding generation improving their reading scores. This trend has continued in the skill area, but not in advanced reading comprehension (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1990). In the 1980's the sharpest declines were on the SAT and ACT scores for college bound students. In the past decade comparisons have been made between the American student's test scores and those of other nation's students. Fears that the nation was becoming intellectually inferior to others in the world community, initiated an extensive critical analysis of the educational system. The results show the United States not improving its literacy rate; while, illiteracy is nonexistent in nations such as Japan (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989).

BACKGROUND

The Kentwood School district has had a history of expending significant amounts of human and monetary resources to obtain the best basal reading series available. Yet, as the State of Michigan tests were given, the scores did not show improvement in proportion to the monies spent.

In 1985, the Commission on Reading published Becoming a Nation of Readers, stating:

> Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written text. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information (Commission on Reading, 1985, p. 7).

The State of Michigan led the rest of the nation in first encouraging and then requiring that understanding and application of knowledge gained from the written word should be the focal point of the teaching of reading curriculums.

The Kentwood School district has vested 15 teachers with the responsibility to research and write a new early childhood curriculum and scope and sequence. This committee will determine the direction the district will take in educating the children in grades kindergarten through second grade. The overall goal and curriculum objectives are to follow appropriate developmental practices as found in research. The adoption of the Whole Language approach, which will replace the basal reading series with teacher initiated literature based materials, is the direction we are initially taking. The committee has concluded that there is a need to facilitate a more child-centered program in language. In order to accommodate this agenda, we need to define what we perceive as a developmentally appropriate whole language approach and how it compares with the basal reading program.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to critically review the research on the whole language approach and basal reading programs. It will be necessary to look at available research to determine if a program with a strong emphasis on early phonics preceding context reading, a program with no phonics,

or a program with a delicate balance of the use of phonics within the contextual reading will best address Kentwood's educational needs.

As educators, we realize the necessity to investigate and then analyze these findings before proposing recommendations to the Board of Education for adoption.

LIMITATIONS

There is a multitude of research addressing the Whole Language philosophy. Long standing personal attitudes and biases makes this language arts issue an emotional dilemma. The level of literacy of a generation could well rest on the conclusions of these and future studies.

Because there is so much that needs to be investigated, I do not feel this research paper can come to a definitive answer. I will present the opinions of these authors, trying not to show my bias. It is my hope the readers will have some factual knowledge on which to make an informed decision as to their choice of a language arts curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

BASAL READING PROGRAMS

History and Philosophy:

The basal reading program includes a series of textbooks which are called "basals", "readers", or "basal readers". William S. Gray and Arthur I. Gates first introduced a systematic language textbook series, which incorporated methods of instruction used to teach reading to the deaf. In 1930-31 Gray and Gates introduced "basal reading " to the American educational scene (Armstrong, 1990). These first basals were thought harmful to young readers because of their rigidly controlled vocabularies and emphasis on memorization of whole words.

Vocabulary:

The modern basal materials are designed to be sequential in both difficulty of vocabulary and level of interest. In an effort to control the vocabulary difficulty, some selections taken from other sources are edited (Zarrillo, 1978). Goodman (1986) feels that if editing leads to controlling the vocabulary and eliminating some descriptive language, the publishing companies are sacrificing interest and making many stories bland and unimaginative. Other critics often find that the vocabulary is stilted and limited at the early

preprimer levels. Cassidy (1987) justifies this vocabulary control as a necessity to acquire word identification. He feels young people need lots of practice in applying their new skills.

Readability:

Cassidy (1987) declares: "The basal reader is one of most maligned instructional materials in American schools". One reason for criticism centers on the attempt to apply readability standards while adapting existing stories. This may lead to the elimination of casual relationships and the discarding of important information.

Illustrations:

The relationship of pictures in the basal reader and the acquisition of literacy may be problematic. Children enjoy pictures and the pictures do stimulate interest in books. Simons & Elster (1990) state that because children's acquisition of language is so contextualized, pictures play an important role in the construction of meaning. Therefore, the pictures make learning language easier by building upon a child's natural instincts. Often, the text becomes too picture dependent and then the reader is unable to separate the role of the print and the role of the picture in gaining meaning. Simons & Elster (1990) recommend pictures be eliminated from children's readers. This process will require that the vocabulary be loosened and words selected

more carefully.

Teacher's Editions:

The teacher's editions cause some concern because of their set method of presenting materials and skills. The publishers attempt to make all the decisions on how students will move through the basal series. There is a prescription for content, sequence, goals and language for the literacy lessons. However, the ideas and resources which are gathered by some of the leading reading educators (Arnold & Smith 1988) will be helpful to a beginning teacher. The newer textbook series offer guidance for the instruction of higher level reading and writing skills. They direct the teacher to access prior knowledge and make use of inferential and analytic thinking.

Phonics and Skills:

The most widely researched and controversial instructional method in the basal reading program is the use of skills and phonics to learn vocabulary. The International Reading Association estimates that literacy is the subject of one thousand research papers each year. The majority of these papers are concerned with why the United States, with all its resources, has a literacy problem (Armstrong 1989). Skill based advocates believe controlled sequencing of skills is of primary importance for children to learn to be literate. They firmly endorse the set plans developed by

cognitive psychology and education (Weaver, 1991). Two such researchers, Goodman (1986) and Schickedanz (1986) agree that language has a history which dates to infancy. Babies are literally compelled to talk out of the need to communicate. They become language users by actually using it, not by practicing separate parts and then assembling these parts into a usable form at a later date. The "model for acquisition" (Altwerger et al., 1987) is real use and not practice through exercises.

Oral Language:

Oral language is gained in the social context over the preschool years. When a child arrives at school, Whole Language teachers do not expect a student to use adult language, "correct" word identification, or "correct" spelling. They will need time to have experiences to stimulate development. Children in early childhood classrooms should be given this gift of time. (Weaver, 1991).

Each person's language retains its own characteristics. Each person retains his own style like he has his own thumbprint. Language relates the users thoughts, they are not simply empty words. Language is formed by the social need to understand others and to be understood by them (Goodman, 1986).

within the text. Its goal is to help children use the interrelationship of clues through the use of "authentic reading and writing". The foundation of Whole Language lays on the premise that children will become "skilled Language users" rather than to "learn language skills".

Whole Language is not a packaged program. It does not have subskills or necessary materials. The best practice for Whole Language is "real use". It is a natural process.

Whole Language is often confused with the Language Experience approach. Language Experience draws the learners experience from his oral language. Whole Language sees oral and written language as related, not as "alternative symbolic renditions of the other".

Probably the question most asked concerns Whole Language's relationship to the open classroom. Both are centered on the "whole child" with learning being a hands-on experience. The distinction is in the degree in which the teacher can intervene in student interaction. In the Whole Language classroom, the teacher are often co-learner, constructing meaning with the students. In the Open Classroom the grouping structure often determines the schedule of learning while the Whole Language classroom, itself, is tied to the task.

Whole Language is a product of research coming from many disciplines, including psycholinguistics, socialinguistics,

reading can be divided into subskills and that learning to read means scoring well on them. Goodman (1986) & Kamii (1990) endorse teacher observation over the use of standardized test. This is applicable to screening, placement and evaluation. Placement for special services is an exception and the type of testing should be determined by the special education committee. It is important to identify the purpose for which the test data is being gathered before determining the appropriate testing instrument in every case.

WHOLE LANGUAGE: A PHILOSOPHY FOR INSTRUCTION

History and Philosophy:

Many educators are implementing a Whole Language program without understanding the top down concepts. They hear of the wonderful activities in which the practitioners of this language arts program are engaged and hail it as the great answer to developing literate citizens (Weaver, 1991).

To really understand what is involved when we refer to Whole Language, we need to clarify what it is not. According to (Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores, 1987), Whole Language is not a practice. It is a philosophy, a set of beliefs, a perspective.

It is not a whole word approach of getting the word out. Rather, it is the process of getting meaning from a text.

Whole Language is not another way of teaching skills

forgot the real purpose --"the communication or meaning". Even a scientific approach still leaves the reader with only a string of sounds. There is a prevailing belief that not all students are phonetic learners who can hear and apply phonetic rules. If the learning style is used as the determining factor, then a well-conceived program of phonics instruction will be an effective tool with the right child (Gibson, 1991).

Testing:

Attitudes about testing are conflicting. When we speak about tests connected to reading skills we are addressing the use of standardized test. Chall (1987) stated that tests can be helpful to detect reading difficulties in the early grades, so remedial procedures can be initiated. She, also, feels that testing characterizes a school and in doing so improves reading achievement. The validity of standardized reading test can be questioned. Validity is the degree that a test is testing what it is supposed to test and on that basis, the validity of reading tests can be questioned. Reading tests are not about reading (Kamii, 1990). They test skills and knowledge, but little attention is given to the interpretation or analysis of a literary piece. The language is controlled to the grade level appropriateness and the content is often contrived for universal consumption. The assumption made by the makers of standardized tests is that

publishers who are outside of the school context (Shannon, 1989).

Chall (1987) is unyielding in her conviction that instruction in decoding and word recognition is necessary to develop skills for later reading stages. She does not feel that most children will discover this sound/symbol relationship on their own. The Commission on Reading (1985), of which Jean Chall was a member, agreed with her stand. They stated that a child who is taught phonics has a better start in learning; but that research cannot justify the use of any one method of presentation. Armstrong (1989) stated his belief why strong phonetic programs are replaced by faulty programs built on myths. He feels that it is big business, that reading experts lack knowledge about phonics instruction, and there is a lack of legal redress for educational malpractice.

Hillerich, (1990) notes that some preplanned sequence of instruction makes more sense than to have each teacher following her own convictions. Continuity is certainly better than chaos. Perhaps he states, developmental status can be incorporated into the pacing and planning of the curriculum.

Goodman, (1986) makes a strong case for not using a phonics program with beginning readers. He says we took the language apart into small pieces; but unfortunately we

Developmentally Appropriate:

Understanding a child's cognitive developmental stages can help educators make sense of the reasoning behind necessary methods of instruction in the Whole Language concept. Piaget (Forman and Kuschner, 1983) identified four stages in cognitive development which are built upon each other. Children move through these stages at different speeds, but they follow the same order.

Stage one is the "sensorimotor" stage whereby a child from birth to age 2 understands his environment from his own actions and responds to it. He make use of practical intelligence.

By stage two the child is making use of "preoperational" thought. Between the ages 2 and 7 years of age, the child begins making use of symbolic representation. He begins to understand the function of speech. He can grasp the relationship of one action to another, but cannot grasp the implications of what these actions will be. The concept of conservation is not possible for a child at this stage as he is unable to understand the "quantitative aspect of that change". (Forman and Kuschner, 1983). This is the stage most children will begin having experiences in the early childhood settings.

The ability to mentally reverse action within the environment is found in the third stage. This "concrete-

operational" stage encompasses the ages 7 to 11. Conservation of knowledge is possible at this stage with the child understanding that the amount of a substance does not change when placed in different shape containers.

In stage four the child begins to think about thinking. This "formal operational" develops after the age of 11. This stage does not involve the early childhood educator directly, but, it is important for the child to be move toward this goal.

Using these developmental stages of Piaget's as a foundation, researchers have tried to develop a "mind-set" to help educators fit the curriculum to what is known about how young children learn. As children learn to use oral language to communicate as a natural response to their environment, their parents favorably respond. Social acceptance is established. With encouragement and respect, the child's ability to control his language to communicate will develop naturally. Children are born wanting to learn as evidenced by the hours they spend examining their hands. What looks like play to an adult is really a child learning about himself in relation to his world (Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1989).

The new sounds and words children make are not somehow connected together to make sentences. Instead these words are really undifferentiated "globs" associated with what some

experts call a holophrastic stage (Goodman, 1986). These "globs" have generalized meaning. As the child develops, the whole thought is uttered. It is really a whole to part process. One of the best indicators on how well that child is going to do in school, is the way he processes language (Rotman, 1988).

Phonics and Skills:

Whole Language recognizes the fact that language should not be broken down into isolated skills. If the premise is that the developmental stage of these children dictates a hands-on curriculum and that the social interaction in the classroom is essential to learning, then a developmentally appropriate class will be the answer. Young students will learn language only if it is presented in a way that makes sense to them (Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1989). This is the rational for using literature, rather than basal readers. Considerable research evidence does support the theory that children will learn naturally through trade books. This fact is understandable in the context that oral language is also learned naturally. Literacy is acquired in the same way; naturally and over time. The literacy experience can well involve all four of the aspects of language, reading, speaking, listening and writing (Gracia and Pearson, 1990).

Comprehension:

One of the most important features of the whole language

lesson is the demonstration or modeling of the teacher. Comprehension is the knowledge domain that is the most abstract and least demonstrated. It is not possible to tell a child how to understand a text, but discussion of differing points of view will give him practice.

Bracy, (1990) found that metacomprehension, using monitoring and evaluation, was fostered in the whole language classroom although there was no instruction on comprehension skills. Students who used whole "language type instruction" outperformed their peers who were instructed with the basal. The Commission on Reading (1985) states: "No matter how children are introduced to words, very early in the program they should have experience with reading these words in meaningful text." By the Commission's own definition reading is a process of gaining meaning from writing.

The idea that first you learn to read and then you read to learn is considered false by Whole Language advocates. Goodman (1986) says the two happen at the same time. Language development empowers the learner to own the process by which he learns.

Research on Comprehension:

Ruetzel and Hollingsworth (1990) came to some significant conclusions on comprehension through their research. At Brigham Young University, these researchers

devised a experiment to investigate the question of skill hierarchies in reading comprehension. With the Whole Language attitude of teaching skill in context, it was even more important to know if there were discrete comprehension skills.

The subjects were fifty-eight fourth grade and sixty-one sixth grade students. Five of ten teachers were trained in the comprehension skill areas of: locating details, drawing conclusions, finding sequence and determining the main idea. The students were randomly divided between the instructional and control groups. The subjects in the instructional group were instructed in nineteen different skill lessons dealing with the comprehension skills. The control group was given instruction for the use of literature in reading. This control group was then guided through sustained silent reading using literature books from the library. "The Criterion Referenced Comprehension Test" was administered to the subjects before and after the experiment.

At the end of the test period, it was found by the researchers that comprehension did not consist of distinct skills. Interestingly, children who read trade books scored as well as those trained in selected comprehension skills. Lessons in comprehension skills just did not help the student to internalize a wide variety of vocabulary, structure and genre. The researchers recommended that more time be given

to reading "connected text" during instruction time. Also, teaching of comprehension should focus on how to gain understanding from various types of materials which are read.

Writing:

Recent research suggests that reading, writing, listening and speaking all develop as an integrated skill (Flickinger and Long, 1990). Writing offers children an excellent opportunity to develop. Skills become meaningful because the children need them to make their compositions clearer to convey their message. Writing is another way to enter the world of reading. Children focus on the details of print when they write. But, writing is more than print. It is communication and thinking, supported by the processes of music, art, language, drama and reading. As we accept a small child's speech, we also accept unconventional spelling and letters when he writes (Thorne, 1988).

Written language occurs within the literacy event of attaining oral speech and reading. In speech, both the listener and the speaker are present. In reading the writer and reader are present. But, in writing the event is very personal. The writer must develop a sense of audience to be the author (Goodman, 1983). Students need language for a variety of intentions. Teachers must be immersed in writing and reading activities and make the integration of the two real to the students. Children learn to read and write as

naturally as they learn to talk and listen (Goodman, 1983).

When children begin to write it looks much like scribbling. It is considered pretend; not real. Learning to write involves observation of others who are doing the real thing. It is not simply the process of learning to write the alphabet. We can facilitate a child's writing if we support his beginning efforts: his invented spelling. After a great deal of exploration, children discover letters represent phonemes (Schickedanz, 1990).

Only by doing, do the children develop these natural parts of literacy. In recent research, young children were asked to write a story after experiences in both basal and Whole Language classrooms. The findings were significant. The basal text class produced stories similar to their published material content. However, the Whole Language class composed stories which were reflective of their life experiences. Language should not be removed from its natural setting. Rather, it should be celebrated wherever it is found. Language needs to be presented as a whole in the context which will provide the best clues for making sense of it (Mills and Clyde, 1991) .

Risk Taking:

From the very beginning when an infant begins babbling he is taking a risk. This risk diminishes when the parents applaud him. Risk taking is one of the cornerstones of the

Whole Language philosophy. Children should feel free to take risks because the Whole Language environment support his efforts. This environment should be sustained to stimulate creative thinking, opportunities for discovery, and critical thinking. The process of risk taking is problem solving, collaboration and learning by trial and error (Thorne, 1988). As educators start looking at education as the sum of the child's experiences, it becomes necessary for them to change their delivery system for literacy. The educational system is going to have to respond to the needs of the children rather than having the children fit their curriculum. When the environment is safe (developmentally appropriate), the children will be willing to take those risks necessary for them to feel comfortable with their own learning style.

According to Hillerich, (1990), a part of this risk taking should be developing metacognitive skills and the ability to monitor their products and behavior.

Teacher as a Facilitator:

The teacher is the prime facilitator of the environment in which learning take place for the children. Teachers are reflected in the classroom and the responses of the students. The dynamic interaction between teacher and student changes all the participants involved in this teaching/learning experience (Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., & Hood, W.J. 1989). But, all the journals, themes, science and literature

experiences do not make a classroom Whole Language. It is the teacher who makes these practices Whole Language by having a set of belief and intentions. Alwerger, Edelsky & Flores (1987) see the following as the beliefs a teacher must internalize in order to be able to facilitate a Whole Language Classroom:

(a) Language is for making meaning, for accomplishing purposes.

(b) Written language is language so it, also, is for accomplishing purposes.

(c) The cuing system of language (phonology, orthology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics) are always simultaneously present.

(d) In all situations language takes place.

(e) The situations is critical to making meaning.

To guarantee that these belief are evidenced in the classroom, the learning environment must be "meaning-centered" and provide "stimultaneous and interacting cues and be contextual" (Atwerger et al., 1987). Whole language teachers need to completely re-orientate themselves as to their views on teaching. Procedures that reflect the functioning of the students will be necessarily put into place. The classroom will be more fluid and dynamic with the students learning as much from each other as from the teacher.

The class will be more democratic, with the students participating actively, "rather than submit passively to authority" (Weaver, 1991). This interaction is part of the philosophy of learning from the environment, including students, friends and adults. Discussion, sharing ideas, working together to solve problems are the teachers, not the instruction. Students are able to learn complex processes from engaging in those processes, with the teaching coming in response to their investigation. Much teaching will be done incidentally in the context of "an authentic literacy event" (Weaver, 1991).

Another innovation for the classroom teacher will be giving up some of the control expected in a classroom. Research has shown that "metacognitive control of cognitive processes and intrinsic motivation" demand that students become an active participant in the planning and evaluating of the curriculum (Gracia & Pearson, 1990) . The goals of Whole Language can only be shared in an atmosphere of shared responsibility. Vygotsky (1962) used the concept of "scaffolding" to characterize learning as a "social situation". Scaffolding is appropriate to Whole Language teaching when we consider the teacher as a temporary and adjustable support.

Sensitivity to individual differences and needs will enable a teacher to develop her curriculum to meet those

widely diverse abilities. Activities should reflect all the children's needs, therefore, varying in the level of their complexity.

Hickman and Cullinan, (1989) identified some of the essential features for an effective Whole Language Program.

1. Children are read to on a daily basis.
2. Children have time to read books of their own choosing.
3. Children discuss and reflect upon the books they read.
4. Children respond to books through writing, art, drama, music and talking.
5. Children write on topics of their own choosing.
6. Children share their reading, writing, and art. products with the entire class.
7. Children use a variety of good books as an essential of theme study.
8. The daily schedule is flexible.

The use of these features will lend authenticity to the Whole Language set of beliefs.

A teacher will realize that she is a facilitator as her students become more independent. Then, both teacher and learner develop more confidence in themselves.

Textbooks and Materials

There are no set materials for a Whole Language teacher

to use. That would be impossible because Whole language is a a set of belief, a perspective (Altwerger, 1987). Literature-based reading and writing tie the theory and the student in a natural way to all learning processes--speaking, listening, reading and writing. Literature is not fragmented and so the child is only involved in reality. There are many lists of appropriate literature and some publishers are advertising their own versions. Knowing the source of the reading list and choosing what the children want to learn are the best guide. Every classroom should have a library of the books which are appropriate. The Plowden Report (1966) defined the necessity for curriculum materials this way:

> At the heart of the educational process lies the child. No advances in policy, no acquisition of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child, unless they are fundamentally acceptable to him.
>
> Knowledge of the manner in which children develop, therefore, is of prime importance, both in avoiding educationally harmful practices and introducing effective ones. Vol. I.

Teacher Preparation

Becoming a Whole Language teacher will take a large commitment. It will mean making a decision to accept the responsibility to investigate and make use of all research on how a child learns(Goodman, 1986). Often the universities have not made use of the research on Whole Language and the teacher is ill-prepared to take this responsibility upon

herself. Workshops, college courses, observations, and colleague interaction are some of the resources available. Reading materials written by researchers and then forming intelligent hypothesis, which can be tested, will help the teacher own her curriculum. The Report of the NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education (1988) states: "An Essential ingredient to quality early childhood programs is a well trained staff that is supported by knowledgeable and sensitive administrators". NASBE recommends staff development in harmony with a long term plan which is developed by the staff. The Task Force, also, sees a need for networking in the schools so the staff can observe and discuss various methods of creating a learner-friendly environment.

Evaluation of Pupil Progress

Evaluating children within the framework of an integrated Whole Language curriculum is described by (Goodman, Y., 1989) as "Kidwatching". These kidwatching activities occurred in three different ways. Teachers evaluate kids while they are observing, interacting or analyzing the child.

Observation is the teacher making a conscious choice to watch one child, a child as a member of a small or of a large group. While observing, the teacher can make judgements about how well the child uses language and leadership or

collaborative capabilities.

Analysis include finding out what the child knows about language using their written or oral productions. Using psycholinguistic and socialinguistic knowledge, the teacher can analyze how well the child's use of language has developed (Goodman, 1986).

Interaction is an opportunity for the teacher to question, challenge, and encourage the child to grow beyond what he is thinking while discovering what he knows.

Linek (1991) addresses three process and some methods to facilitate evaluation. An "individual comparison process" allows the student to make a judgement concerning his own progress and then is encouraged to build on his own strengths. In a "group comparison process" the student work is compared to the group and then he is given the option of making corrections. The 'criteria comparison Process" measures the child against what is expected for mastery in a particular course of study. Research from 1960 has pointed to the fact that the method used by the teacher does not significantly effect the student's achievement. Rather, the teachers attitude and approach are a far greater effect on student performance. Teachers need to empower themselves and come to the realization that they are "practitioners of intellectual life (Linek, 1991)".

One of the reasons an accurate comparison cannot be made

between the Whole Language/ language arts philosophy and other methods of teaching for literacy is that advocates of Whole Language resist traditional research design and instruments (Reutzel & Cooter, 1990). Reutzel and Cooter (1990) found in their research that there was evidence favoring whole language over basal instruction when tested on a standardized test.

Kamii (1990) stresses the importance of comparing a child intellectual progress with his knowledge from one point in time to another point in time. Standardized tests will compare the child's score to either his peers or a group of students who are in the same grade. Research has shown that children develop at different times, so it stands to reason that this would not be a valid indicator how knowledge is being assimilated.

Kamii (1990) addresses the evaluation process with some practical and usable techniques. She values the use of oral reading tapes that can be evaluated with a procedure she has devised (pp. 119-134). She emphasis that interviews with children, samples of their work, journals, and teacher comments throughout the year are to be considered with equal value. No one measurement should indicate progress or failure.

It is recommended (Rotman, 1988) that all of the data that has been collected throughout the school year should be

maintained in a portfolio. The portfolio will be passed on to the next teacher each year until the child leaves third grade.

Research, Critiques and Rejoinder

The controversy concerning how best to improve a child's literacy is evidenced by the number of research papers that are being critiqued without research supported alternative recommendation being offered. The research that was performed by (Stahl and Miller, 1989) generated controversy in the education research field. This study was part of five projects conducted by the United States Office of Education. It compares the Whole Language experience with a basal reading program. The results were: (1) Whole Language experiences are probably more effective in kindergarten and first grade. (2) The tests indicated that Whole Language may be more effective for word recognition than for reading comprehension. (3) Recent studies show the basal reading approach have greater effect. (4) The effects of Whole Language on the population which is labeled "specifically disadvantaged" were weaker. The results indicated that Whole Language may be an effective approach for "print concepts and expectations". However the research indicated the basal reading program may be more helpful teaching "word recognition skills prerequisite to effective comprehension".

Schickerdanz (1990) analyzed the Stahl and Miller study

and found some of the research faulty. She felt that longitudinal data on the grades third and beyond was missing. it would not be possible to draw a conclusion as to the effectiveness of a Whole Language approach at that level. The exclusion of writing from the testing resulted in not evaluating one of the broadest goal of Whole Language.

McGee and Lomax (1990), felt that Stahl and Miller have not thoroughly defined exactly what Whole Language is. They were disturbed by the comparison made between Whole Language of the 1980's and the language experiences of 1960 and 1970. Furthermore, the conclusion that there is a need for a "more systematic approach to decoding than Whole Language is not supported by the research.

Stahl (1990) finds in his rejoinder no evidence in Schickdanz, McGee and Lomax reports that lead him to believe any of his conclusions should be altered. It is his view that education is continuously evolving, building on previous ideals. Finally, believing that written language parallels the language system is not supported by research and would be only a theory on which to base further investigation.

BOTH STRATEGIES: WHOLE LANGUAGE AND BASAL

Review of literature indicates the child's learning style, coupled with his developmental stage should dictate the approach to teaching reading which will be most effective

Thomas (1990). Cochran (1989) believes that literature-based reading gives children the opportunity to experience entire stories while feeling the character's motivation and emotions. However, the basal is a powerful tool for teaching the skill of "sequencing and controlled vocabulary". The new phonic summary is seeking to find the most effective way in which to teach sound/symbols, spelling, early reading, and skilled reading.

Feppon and Dahl (1991) and R. W. Gaskins, J. C Gaskins, and I. W. Gaskins (1991) agreed that to understand the beginning reading and spelling process, we need to consider the learners perspective. It is possible to facilitate the construction of meaning within a Whole Language approach and yet attain automatically in decoding words. If authentic reading and language experiences is the basis for the program, decoding will come automatically. Research has found some children are naturally tuned into the sound/symbol relationship of words. Others do not even understand this sound/symbol relationship at the end of first grade. Each child has his own developmental clock (Goodman, 1986) and his own learning style (Thomas 1990).

A strong argument for including a phonic program in the Whole Language classroom is put forth by (Gaskins, Gaskins, & Gaskins 1991). They relate the experiences of the Benchmark School in Media, Pa. with a pupil population that is made up

of poor readers. Most of the students did not enjoy reading because the basal reading that they had been exposed to just didn't make sense. The children's expectations from literature experiences and school were poor. The answer for the maladies of these children was to "immerse them in literature". Although most of the children showed progress over the schools 20 year history of this curriculum, a stagnation between third and fourth grade was apparent. These students needed to guess or ask the words that were not in their vocabulary. They had not been taught the phonetic skills to figure them out on their own. Where some students found it natural, others found it impossible to use the context to "supply the clues" they needed for figuring out the newly encountered words. The research seemed to indicate that poor readers are not able to discover the orthographic relationship of clues as the good readers can. Poor readers needed instruction to understand their language process. The investigators (Cochran, 1989; Freppon & Dahl, 1991; R. W. Gaskins, J. C. Gaskins, & I. W. Gaskins, 1991) came to the conclusion that it was necessary to combine the strategies of the skills with the literature and philosophy of Whole Language.

Freppon and Dahl (1991) defined some "Principles for Phonics Instruction in Whole Language."

(1) "Learner centered". Instruction should rely on the

learners needs rather than apply a sequenced phonics program. The instruction should be developmentally appropriate.

(2) "Learned in context". Reading and writing are language processes that need to be learned in authentic context. Phonic instruction will need to be contextualized, not taught in isolation.

(3) "Presented after foundation concepts are learned". Begin phonic instruction only after a foundation of the meaningfulness language has been exhibited.

(4) "Meaning-Based". The meaning the children are trying to communicate controls the instruction. "Children's intended meaning" provides the opportunity to discuss sound/symbol relationships.

(5) "Integrated with other written language concepts". Sound/ symbol instruction are tied to the form and function of the written language.

6) "Learned through teacher demonstration". The teacher demonstrates for the children how she figures out words.

(7) "Learned through active involvement". The children are actively involved with the teacher as she writes.

(8) "Learned through multiple information sources". Children learn through active communication with each other, print around the room, pooling their knowledge, and asking the teacher.

The researchers noted that these principles should not be construed as the whole answer as there is a need for research to continue.

CHAPTER THREE

Conclusions

A review of the most current research indicates that there are still many diverse opinions on the appropriate learning environment for young children. Proponents of both Whole Language and the Basal reading programs have made valid arguments in favor of using their way of reaching children. It is difficult to compare the two, because Whole Language does not have a set of sequenced learning goals.

Whole Language is a philosophy, a set of beliefs (Atwerger et al., 1987). It is a process of exposing the children to authentic reading and writing. Most educators will need to take very seriously the research that is available in order to understand this latest direction education is taking. Rotman (1988), who is acknowledged as one of the foremost Whole Language educators, points out: ".....while many would say I am a whole language teacher, I am personally uncomfortable with the pureness that the term 'whole language' implies.... I am also concerned about the possible misuse of the term whole language as a new catch phrase that opportunists will exploit to the their advantage." (p. 26).

Another problem found for the philosophy is the materials which are to be used, should be authentic and yet much evidence was found that this may well not continue to be

the case. Daily, teachers are inundate by advertisement for a new set of "whole language" books. The literature tells of new predictable books, big book and meaningful stories. A close and objective scrutiny will reveal bland illustrations or/and contrived stories. Rotman (1988) calls this the "basalizing" of literature.

The benefits of using phonics in a language program is well documented. There is no doubt that children have different learning styles which must be accommodated. The disagreement comes when the vocabulary becomes too structured and the skills are not connected to language in a meaningful way.

The NASBE's (1988) recommends: "..staff development in harmony with a long term plan". This statement validates the direction in which the Kentwood Early Childhood Committee is proceeding (Appendix 1). Staff, School Board, parents and the community, training (Appendix 2) will be imperative and a well-defined philosophy (Appendix 3) be put in place.

To facilitate the need for a scope and sequence, the committee has rewritten the curricular objectives (appendix 1) into reader outcome language. The scope and sequence encompasses the kindergarten through second grades as one unit to follow the philosophy of a developmentally appropriate program for early childhood. These have been submitted to the State of Michigan for approval.

More research is needed to determine not only the immediate results of using the new basal series, the Whole Language belief or a combination of both, but the long term implications, also.

Recommendations:

Several recommendations can be made to facilitate the most effective curriculum possible.

1. The views of all staff members must be honored and taken into considerations. This does not mean just during the curriculum writing, but during the implementation it. There are differing views, and support can be found for these as well.
2. Parents, teachers, administrators and the public should be given the opportunity to investigate and make educated decisions. Kentwood should not implement a program as far reaching as this without a well-informed support system.
3. We should not be fearful of utilizing a program incorporating more than one philosophy. We should take the best they all have to offer.
4. Personally, I will recommend, based on the research, that we interpret this program literally as Whole Language. We can take this philosophy, remembering

it is not a methodology, and create a classroom that is real, natural and functional. The teacher can be a facilitator incorporating all the sound/symbols and necessary skills using good literature as the base. An evaluation system will need to be put in place to make the school accountable to the government "Reader Outcomes". Using (Kamii, 1990) as a guide to testing and portfolio form of record keeping, I believe we can indicated a child's progress more accurately than can a grading system.

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LANGUAGE

The ultimate goal of the language component is to have children develop and extend their listening, speaking, writing and reading competencies, based on their individual abilities and levels of development.

CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES

Listening

Children will:

1. actively participate in experiences aimed at enhancing listening skills -- music, stories, rhymes, conversations, sound tapes, sound cans, etc.

2. demonstrate appropriate listening behaviors (looking at speaker, sitting relatively still, waiting for own conservational turn, responding to oral cues).

3. increase vocabulary.

4. increase auditory comprehension skills.

5. demonstrate auditory comprehension by:
   a. following familiar and extended directions
   b. paraphrasing the essence of the messages or main ideas in stories they hear.
   c. repeating in correct detail and sequence the messages or stories they hear.
   d. responding to oral language or language that is read to them with related comments or questions.
   e. visualizing what is heard
   f. recognizing patterns of rhyme

Speaking

Children will:

1. extend their awareness that speaking translates feelings and thoughts into words that communicate meaning.

2. develop appropriate body language (eye contact, body position, gestures) to alert a listener to their intent.

3. develop the ability to speak expressively by varying volume, rate and pitch.

4. increase vocabulary

5. develop the ability to verbally express their wants, needs, experiences, and understanding of concepts and events.

6. develop the ability to converse with adults and other children.

7. contribute appropriately to group discussions.

8. participate in creative oral experiences, such as poetry, nursery rhymes, finger plays and plays.

9. experiment with language sounds: rhythm, volume, pitch.

WRITING

Emergent to Early Fluent Writing

Children will:

1. extend and develop their awareness that writing transforms thoughts, ideas, and feelings into concrete symbols to communicate meaning.

2. see many examples of written language.

3. observe how words and sentences are written.

4. dictate a story about a picture they have drawn and show interest in having the story printed.

5. experiment with producing written language, (drawing, scribbling, letter streams, invented spelling, and corrected spelling) for many purposes (lists, stories, correspondence, labels, journals).

6. attempt letter formations through multi-sensory experiences (finger paint, clay, sand).

7. choose a topic or idea for writing a story.

8. begin to organize their ideas in a logical sequence.

9. use words as well as pictures to tell their story.

10. see themselves as competent writers.

11. improve memory related to written language (directionality, letter formation and sequence, spacing).

Early Fluent Writing to Fluent Writing

12. continue to produce written language for many purposes.

13. develop their ability to utilize the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, publishing).

14. move sequentially through the developmental stages of invented spelling: initial consonant, intitial and final consonant, initial, interior, and final consonant, insertion of vowel place holders, use of correct vowels as place holder, and silent letters.

15. increase their basic spelling vocabulary.

16. utilize correct format for writing a variety of communications, including letters and stories.

17. demonstrate appropriate use of capital letters.

18. demonstrate appropriate use of periods, commas, question marks, quotation marks, and exclamation points.

READING

Emergent Through Early Fluent Reading

Children will:

1. attach meaning to pictures and print.
2. experience oral reading by teacher on a **daily** basis.
3. show active involvement in stories they hear and read.
4. relate personal experiences to a variety of literary content.
5. choose book experiences for personal enjoyment.
6. practice reading-like behavior.
7. "re-read" familiar books from memory.
8. tell stories about pictures.
9. dictate and/or write and "read" their own stories.
10. move from pretending to read to attempting to match the flow of their own language to print.
11. respond to symbols in the environment (signs, advertisements, labels, etc.)
12. listen to and discuss stories for sequence (beginning/middle/ending, before/after, first/next/last) and sense of story (characters and setting, cause and effect, details and main ideas).
13. be exposed to/distinguish between literary genre (ex. picture books, contemporary fiction, expository, poetry, fantasy).
14. recognize likenesses and differences among pictures, letter-sound associations, and words.
15. develop concepts of print (ex. beginning to end, front and back, page turning, left to right, top to bottom), word and sentence formation, and the concept that both print and pictures carry meaning.
16. predict events and recognize patterns in stories.
17. develop and extend vocabulary at their level.

18. develop an awareness that a sentence expresses a complete thought.

19. identify rhyming patterns in the reading context.

20. identify upper and lower case letters of the alphabet in the context of the whole language experience.

21. demonstrate understanding of the parts of a book: title, author, illustrator, table of contents, title page.

22. use context to select appropriate word for closure (fill in the missing word).

23. create new endings to familiar stories.

24. view self as a reader.

25. take risks as a reader.

Early Fluent through Fluent Reading

26. understand there are multiple meanings for words.

27. rhyme words.

28. grow in ability to independently self correct.

29. use differentiated strategies for understanding narrative reading (such as prediction, story mapping, picture clues and character traits).

30. identify and use differentiated strategies for understanding for content area reading (such as KWL and QAR).

31. grow in an awareness of and extend the use of phonics as a tool.

32. develop appropriate reference and study skills (such as alphabetizing, table of contents and glossary).

33. follow written instructions.

Guidelines for Promoting Children's Language Developement

1. Model appropriate, rich language usage.
2. Read to children every day.
3. Provide a variety of oral and written opportunities for children to respond to literature (response journal, writing new endings, discussing author's intent, etc.)
4. Converse with each child daily.
5. Take advantage of spontaneous opportunities to promote children's language development through discussion.
6. Provide opportunities for children to communicate informally with one another.
7. Plan activities in which the primary goal is for the child to use language to predict, describe and evaluate.
8. Model good listening behavior.
9. Provide experiences to enhance children's visualization and observation skills.
10. Give children appropriate cues to help them listen effectively (saying, "Look up here", "Watch me", using voice inflection, changes in volume).
11. Maintain children's attention using a variety of strategies such as props, gestures, proximity, facial and vocal expressions.
12. Involve children in songs, chants, poems, fingerplays, rhymes, choral readings and reader's theater.
13. Utilize a variety of literary forms when reading to children (picture books, poetry, folk or fairy tales, factual books).
14. Provide a literature rich classroom library
15. Make reference books available for children and model their use.
16. Plan activities in which children, as a group, dictate stories, experiences, or observations and then hear and see their own words in print.

17. Write down child's dictation exactly as spoken, utilizing a variety of writing tools and surfaces.

18. Accept children's own system of spelling in the beginning stages of writing.

19. Integrate language development activities throughout all areas of the curriculum.

20. Provide opportunities for children to share their own writing with others (author's chair and book displays).

21. Create a print-rich environment, including a writing center with a wide range of materials available (charts, book making, labels, directions, recipes, menus).

22. Provide daily writing opportunities (pictures, journals, signs, class books, messages).

23. Create play-based situations in which children are able to practice reading and writing on their own (taking orders at a pretend restaurant, making words in sand, creating their own storybooks, writing out lyrics to songs, reading recipes).

24. Have fun with language.

Kentwood Public Schools
5820 Eastern S. E.
Kentwood Michigan 49508

Dear Parents,

This school year, the Kentwood Public Schools is making some revisions to the curriculum in the area of early childhood education (preschool through grade two). Over sixty teachers and principals are serving on an early childhood curriculum study committee. This committee is consulting with Dr. Anne K. Soderman from Michigan State University. Dr. Soderman is recognized through out Michigan as an expert in the area of early childhood education. Dr. Soderman has spent three days working in the school district so far and will work with us for an additional five days.

The early childhood study committee is enthused about the projects on which they are working and about their time with Dr. Soderman. Parents and school board members will have a chance to hear Dr. Soderman talk about young children and what changes are occurring in schools to meet the unique needs of this precious population.

WHEN: **Wednesday, March 13, 1991**
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

WHERE: **East Kentwood High School**
Freshman Cafeteria

This evening presentation is designed specifically for parents of children in the Kentwood Schools. We think that you will find this meeting interesting and stimulating. Please plan on attending!

Sincerely,

Alison Rugg
Carole Van't Hof
Co-Chairs
Early Childhood Study Committee

Robert M. Dudley
Principal
Meadowlawn School

December 10, 1991

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY

The overall goal of early childhood education in Kentwood is to provide a supportive environment that enables children to grow and develop into responsible, healthy citizens and effective life-long learners.

We believe that all young children are unique, differing in their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs. Children have the right to learn at their own developmental rates.

Based on these beliefs, the early childhood program will encourage the continuing growth of children through developmentally appropriate materials and experiences facilitated by a caring and knowledgeable staff. The curriculum will be child-centered, activity based, and interactive.

Communication with parents and the community, as well as their involvement both at school and at home is vital in the success of this program.

11/15/90